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Growers, Packers and Shippers of California Almonds

August 9, 2000

Steve Ritchie, Acting Executive Director
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Final Programmatic EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Ritchie:

For years now I have been interested and involved in water issues in San Joaquin County. As an almond farmer and processor in Ripon, my livelihood is tied to the land and water supply. I have long been a proponent of developing an organized and fair plan for water distribution in California, as I realize the influx of urbanization and environmental concerns are putting a strain on the water supply in California, much of which has for generations been used productively for agriculture. I certainly realize the current water supply cannot support the needs of urban, environmental, and agricultural uses, and that some or all of these users will have to scale down use in order to provide water for everyone. However, I feel the tactics being used to speed the final Cal-Fed environmental report through the public comment phase is upsetting to fair, concerned farmers like myself.

I ask two things to restore my confidence in the Cal-Fed process:

1. Extend the period to look through the document and provide comments on the final EIS/EIR that was released July 21. It is impossible for a farmer to review thousands of pages in a technical document during harvest, our busiest time of year.
2. Hold public hearings to explain the Cal-Fed proposals and their effects on all water users, including farmers. Over 1,000 representatives of agriculture attended the 16 hearings last year, including myself. We are stewards of the environment and will be hugely impacted by the Cal-Fed proposals; most certainly our understanding of the document and concerns over changes made should be a priority for Cal-Fed officials to address.

I have been a supporter of the Cal-Fed process since its introduction in California. I ask that you treat those of us who will be impacted by the Cal-Fed proposals with the respect we deserve. Include us in the final stages of the Cal-Fed process, so that you can live up to your commitment to the public having a central role in the development of a long-term solution.

Sincerely,

David S. Phippen

cc: Governor Gray Davis Senator Dianne Feinstein Senator Barbara Boxer
State Sen. Dick Monteith Rep. Gary Condit
Assembly Member Mike Machado
San Joaquin County Supervisors